

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY: NEA/ARN:RCSEARING
APPROVED BY: NEA:WRCRAWFORD
NEA:MR. DRAPER

-----121398 270000Z /61

R 260016Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, LE

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF CHARLES MALEK

1. IN A CONVERSATION ON 8/25/78 WITH CRAWFORD AND DRAPER,
DR. CHARLES MALEK, ACCOMPANIED BY ROBERT BASIL OF AMERICAN
LEBANESE LEAGUE, TOOK LINE CONSISTENT WITH WHAT HE HAS BEEN
SAYING TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OVER LAST WEEK OR SO.

2. MALEK SAID HE IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT CURRENT
PLIGHT OF CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON AND IT IS HIS BELIEF
SYRIANS ARE IN LEBANON NOT TO HELP REESTABLISH AUTHORITY OF
GOL BUT TO DESTROY LEBANESE SOCIETY AS IT HAD BEEN AND
ANNIHILATE THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. IT IS INTENTION OF THE
SYRIANS TO EMPLOY THEIR ARMED PRESENCE IN LEBANON TO
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BRING ABOUT THESE CHANGES.

3. DR. MALEK THEN REFERRED TO WHAT HE SAID WAS BECOMING
A WIDESPREAD OPINION IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN
LEBANON THAT THE U.S. ITSELF WAS A PARTY TO THE INTENDED
"ISLAMIZATION" AND "ARABIZATION" OF LEBANON. HE REFERRED
TO A RECENT CONVERSATION HE HAD HAD WITH LEBANESE FRIEND

(UNNAMED) WHO SAID HE HAD PROOF OF THIS. DR. MALIK SAID HE HAD NOT SEEN PROOF AND FOUND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THIS COULD POSSIBLY BE U.S. POLICY. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY SOME JUNIOR OFFICERS AT EMBASSY OR ELSEWHERE MIGHT BE SAYING OR DOING THINGS THAT GAVE SUCH AN IMPRESSION.

PLIGHT OF SOME 300,000 CHRISTIAN REFUGEES WHO HAD BEEN FORCED TO FLEE FROM BEIRUT. HE ADMITTED THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOME PROVOCATION FROM CHRISTIAN SIDE, BUT POINTED OUT THAT PROVOCATION HAD COME FROM MANY SIDES AND, IN ANY CASE, SUCH PROVOCATION COULD NOT JUSTIFY WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION OF BEIRUT.

4. DR. MALIK SAID REGULAR CONTACT BETWEEN LEADERS IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY HAD ERODED OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS. HE FELT MOSLEMS MUST BE BROUGHT BACK INTO PICTURE AND THAT CHRISTIANS HAD DONE A POOR JOB OF DEVELOPING AND ENCOURAGING NEW AND YOUNGER MOSLEM LEADERSHIP. OLD LEADERS NO LONGER HAD REAL FOLLOWING. HE WENT ON TO SAY SARKIS ALSO NO LONGER HAD A FOLLOWING AND WAS OUT OF TOUCH WITH GRASSROOTS. HE SAID STRONG GOVERNMENT WAS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER. DRAPER ADDED THAT POTENTIAL POLITICAL RIVALS COULD NOT AGREE AMONG THEMSELVES ON FORMING CABINET OF POLITICIANS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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5. CRAWFORD TOLD DR. MALIK HE WAS SURE LATTER WELL UNDERSTOOD POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES WITH RESPECT TO LEBANON, THAT OUR POLICY HAD BEEN THE SAME AT LEAST SINCE END OF SECOND WORLD WAR, THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE IN THOSE PRINCIPLES. WE HAD ALWAYS SUPPORTED THE SOVEREIGNTY, INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON AND CONTINUE TO DO SO. SITUATION IN LEBANON TODAY IS VERY DIFFICULT ONE, BUT USG IS DOING EVERYTHING IT CAN TO HELP RESTORE ORDER AND RETURN POWER TO THE GOL. TO THAT END, U.S. CONTINUES TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SARKIS AS PERSON WHO STANDS FOR UNITY. CRAWFORD POINTED OUT THAT SITUATION IS BETTER TODAY THAN IT WAS IN EARLY JULY AND IT WAS OUR HOPE THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER STILL IN WEEKS TO COME. HOWEVER, IT IS NECESSARY T" CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR DISENGAGEMENT AND ALL SIDES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED NOT TO PROVOKE THE OTHER. CRAWFORD POINTED OUT WE BELIEVE SYRIANS DO NOT WISH TO STAY IN LEBANON.

6. DR. MALIK SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF PRESIDENT OR SECRETARY VANCE COULD ISSUE NEW STATEMENT

CAREFULLY WORDED TO REASSURE THE CHRISTIANS AS TO THE
REAL POSITION OF THE U.S., ESPECIALLY SINCE CHRISTIANS

NOW FEEL THEMSELVES IN VERY REAL DANGER. HE SAID
CHRISTIANS DO NOT WANT TO LIVE SEPARATELY AND DO NOT
FAVOR PARTITION.

7. CRAWFORD AGREED THAT PARTITION WAS NOT ANSWER AND SAID
HE SAW A REAL DANGER IF CHRISTIANS ISOLATED THEMSELVES.
HE SAID HE APPRECIATED OPPORTUNITY OF TALKING WITH DR.
MALEK AND THAT WE WOULD TAKE HIS SUGGESTION CONCERNING A
HIGH-LEVEL STATEMENT UNDER ADVISEMENT. HOWEVER, STATEMENT
AT THE WRONG TIME COULD HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECT ON EFFORTS
WE ARE MAKING WITH ALL PARTIES.
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8. ON EVENING AUGUST 24 AMBASSADOR PICKERING AND DRAPER
HAD LENGTHY PRE-DINNER, DINNER, AND POST-DINNER DISCUSSION
WITH MALEK, DURING WHICH MALEK DWELT AT LENGTH ON THE
NEED FOR THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN LEBANON TO KEEP A
PREDOMINANT POSITION. THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS COULD NOT
BE ALLOWED TO BECOME THE EQUIVALENT OF COPTS IN -GYPT
OR EVEN THE EQUIVALENT OF WELL-TREATED CHRISTIANS IN
JORDAN (SINCE THEIR FATE MIGHT BE IN JEOPARDY IF HUSSEIN
SHOULD DIE). IN A DISCUSSION THAT WAS SOMETIMES HEATED
DRAPER AND PICKERING DEALT WITH MALEK'S VARIOUS POINTS
FIRMLY, OCCASIONALLY TOUGHLY, WHILE COMMUNICATING U.S.
COMPASSION FOR LEBANON'S TRAGEDY OF THESE MANY YEARS. WE
WERE PARTICULARLY TOUGH IN DENOUNCING NAUSEATING IMPLI-
CATIONS OF SOME REMARKS THAT THE U.S. HAD GIVEN SYRIA
THE GREEN LIGHT TO TRY TO DESTROY THE POLITICAL AND
MILITARY POWER OF THE MARONITE CHRISTIANS. CHRISTOPHER

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